Press release

PRINTABLE VERSION

Farewell to Finisterre, here comes FitzRoy

31 January 2002

At noon on Monday 4 February 2002, listeners to the Shipping Forecast broadcast by the BBC will have a new name to conjure with. The area Finisterre is to be re-named FitzRoy after Admiral Robert FitzRoy, who was the first ever professional weatherman and founded the Met Office in 1853.

The change has become necessary following an international agreement that Britain, France, Spain, Portugal and Morocco will use a co-ordinated set of sea areas in forecasts for shipping. In the discussions, Spain requested that the area that they have called Finisterre be retained in the co-ordinated set of areas.

The area Finisterre used by the Met Office is a considerably larger area than that defined by the Spanish Meteorological Service (Instituto Nacional de Meteorologia), and, as the area is not strictly in the United Kingdom's area of responsibility for the issue of forecasts and warnings, a new name was required.

Some 53 years have passed since the name Finisterre was first heard on the shipping forecasts; the familiar rhythmic pattern will no longer be Portland, Plymouth, Biscay, Finisterre, Sole, Lundy, Fasnet… as FitzRoy replaces Finisterre.

"The Met Office operates on an international scale; by working with the meteorological services in other countries we are making it easier for listeners to interpret shipping forecasts," explained Martin Stubbs, specialist consultant in marine matters at the Met Office.

"The last major changes in sea area names was in 1984 when the countries bordering the North Sea agreed a co-ordinated set of areas. These changes demonstrate the effectiveness of the World Meteorological Organization in bringing countries together and ensuring the best possible services for the mariner," added Mr Stubbs

The Shipping Forecast is a British institution broadcast by the BBC four times a day and also disseminated via HM Coastguard Stations and other marine communication services attracting many thousands of listeners.

FitzRoy is set to become a household name both in and outside the sailing fraternity.

View the new sea areas

Notes

Finisterre has been used in shipping forecasts since 1949 and the name derives from mariners referring to the western tip of Spain as the end of the earth - 'finis terre'.

Changes to the shipping areas are detailed in the new Marine Weather Services booklet which can be ordered online.

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